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ABSTRACT

A description of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is presented to help bring to light the symptoms that may occur after a traumatic event. The paper's question and answer format provides an easy way to share information about PTSD. Following the definition, an explanation is given of how PTSD starts and how long it lasts. Information is provided on how people can help themselves and what can be expected from professional help. One person's story is presented as an example of how help was obtained when needed. Information is included on where to go for help with this disorder. (JDM)

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ED 462 648

Have you lived through a very scary and dangerous event?

A REAL ILLNESS

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

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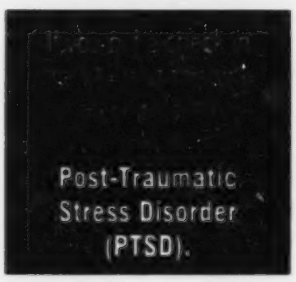
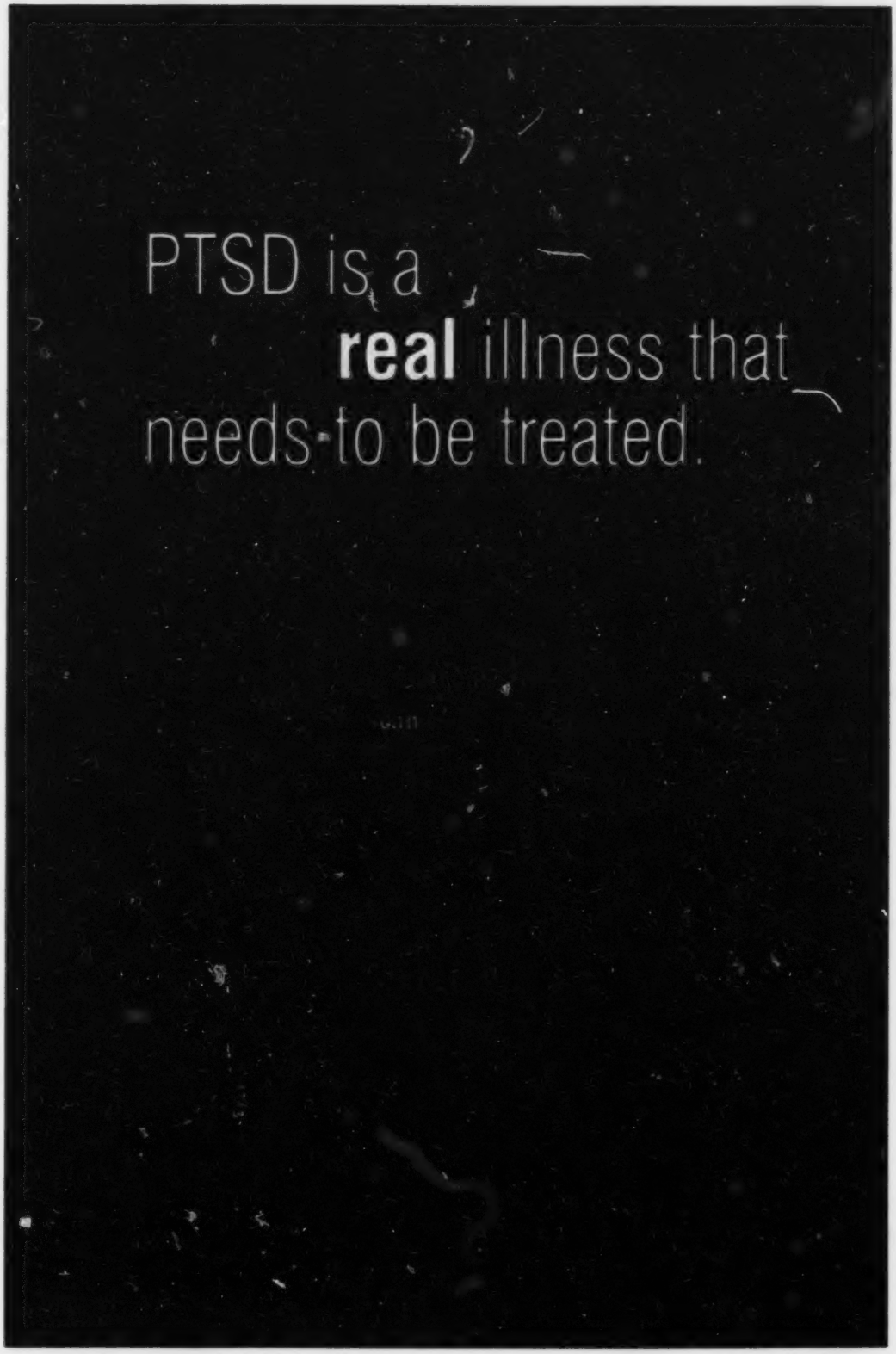
Does This Sound Like You?

Have you lived through a very scary and dangerous event?
Please put a check in the box next to any problems you have.

- ☐ I feel like the terrible event is happening all over again. This feeling often comes without warning.
- ☐ I have nightmares and scary memories of the terrifying event.
- ☐ I stay away from places that remind me of the event.
- ☐ I jump and feel very upset when something happens without warning.
- ☐ I have a hard time trusting or feeling close to other people.
- ☐ I get mad very easily.
- ☐ I feel guilty because others died and I lived.
- ☐ I have trouble sleeping, and my muscles are tense.





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1. What is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?

PTSD is a real illness. People may get PTSD after living through a terrible and scary experience. It can be treated with medicine and therapy.

You can get PTSD after you have been:

- Raped or sexually abused
- Hit or harmed by someone in your family
- A victim of a violent crime
- In an airplane or car crash
- In a hurricane, tornado, or fire
- In a war
- In an event where you thought you might be killed
- Or, after you have seen any of these events

If you have PTSD, you often have nightmares or scary thoughts about the terrible experience you went through. You try to stay away from anything that reminds you of your frightening experience.

You may feel angry and unable to care about or trust other people. You are always on the lookout for danger. You feel very upset when something happens without warning.

2. When does PTSD start and how long does it last?

For most people, PTSD starts within about three months of the terrible event. For some people, signs of PTSD don't show up until years later. PTSD can happen to anyone at any age. Even children can have it.

Some people get better within six months, while others may have the illness for much longer.

3. Am I the only person with this illness?

No. You are not alone. In any year, 5.2 million Americans have PTSD.

4. What can I do to help myself?

☐ Talk to your doctor about the terrible event and your feelings. Teli your doctor if you have scary memories, depression, trouble sleeping, or anger. Tell your doctor if these problems keep you from doing everyday things and living your life. You may want to show your doctor this booklet. It can help you explain how you feel. Ask your doctor for a checkup to make sure you don't have some other illness.

☐ Ask your doctor if he or she has helped people with PTSD. Special training helps doctors treat people with PTSD. If your doctor doesn't have special training, ask for the name of a doctor or counselor who does.

☐ Get more information. Call 1-88-88-ANXIETY to have free information mailed to you.

You can feel better.

5. What can a doctor or counselor do to help me?

- A doctor may give you medicine to help you feel less afraid and tense. But it may take a few weeks for the medicine to work.

- Talking to a specially trained doctor or counselor helps many people with PTSD. This is called "therapy." Therapy can help you work through your terrible experience.

Here is one person's story:

"After I was attacked, I felt afraid, depressed, and angry all the time. I couldn't sleep or eat much. Even when I tried to stop thinking about it, I still had awful nightmares and memories.

"I was confused and didn't know where to go for help. A friend told me to call the doctor. My doctor helped me find a special doctor who knows about PTSD.

"I had to work hard, but after some helpful medication and therapy, I am starting to feel like myself again. I'm glad I made that first call to my doctor."

Remember - you can get help now:

- Talk to your doctor about the terrible event and your feelings.

- Call 1-88-88-ANXIETY (1-888-826-9438). It is a free call. You will get free information about PTSD mailed to you.

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) is part of the Federal government. NIMH conducts medical research to find new and better ways to prevent and treat mental illnesses. NIMH also provides free information about mental illnesses.

To get free information about other mental illnesses, write to NIMH at:

National Institute of Mental Health
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Room 8184, MSC 9663
Bethesda, MD 20892-9663

You can also find free NIMH information online at:
http://www.nimh.nih.gov